

## Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 /084 W

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R 101000Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0998

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 6162

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, TW, US, UR

SUBJECT: ROC REACTION TOMAO'S DEATH: RHETORIC AND REALITY

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE GROC HAS ISSUED NO FORMAL STATEMENT COMMENTING ON THE DEATH OF MAO, THE LOCAL MEDIA GAVE PROMPT AND HEAVY COVERAGE TO HIS DEATH. PRESS, TELEVISION, AND RADIO HAVE DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE TIME AND SPACE TO COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS BY "KNOWLEDGEABLE" LOCAL OBSERVERS, MOST OF WHOM AGREE THAT MAO'S DEATH WILL A)STEP UP THE PRC'S DOMESTIC POWER STRUGGLE AND INSTABILITY, B) SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION BETWEEN THE US AND THE PRC, C) PROMPT THE SOVIET UNION TO INCREASE ITS PRESSURE ON THE PRC AND POSSIBLY TO USE MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IT, AND D) PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GROC TO RECOVER THE MAINLAND.

2. CHINESE MEDIA HAVE EMPHASIZED THE ELATION FELT BY THE CHINESE PEOPLE UPON LEARNING OF THE DEATH OF THEIR "NUMBER ONE ENEMY." HOWEVER, BASED ON COMMENTS WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR, MAO'S DEATH APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN GREETED BY THE LOCAL POPULACE IN A MATTER-OF-FACT WAY, ALBEIT WITH SOME ANXIETY AMONG  
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TAIWANESE CONCERNING THE FUTURE PRC LEADERSHIP AND ITS

POLICIES TOWARD TAIWAN. IN CONTRAST TO VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE MEDIA, NO ONE WITH WHOM EMBOFFS HAVE SPOKEN HAS EXPRESSED ANY CONVICTION OF RECOVERING THE MAINLAND AS A RESULT OF MAO'S DEATH. END SUMMARY.

3. SEPTEMBER 9 EVENING TELEVISION PROGRAMMING AND SEPTEMBER 10 LOCAL PRESS GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO MAO'S DEATH. ALL LOCAL COMMENTATORS AGREED THAT HIS DEATH WOULD TOUCH OFF A FURTHER POWER STRUGGLE AND AGGRAVATE INTERNAL STRIFE ON THE MAINLAND. MOST ALSO RULED OUT ANY POSSIBILITY OF A LONG-TERM COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND PREDICTED THE "DEATH" OF MAO'S IDEOLOGY.

4. MOST COMMENTATORS WERE IN AGREEMENT THAT MAO'S DEATH WOULD SLOW DOWN THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS. THEY POINTED TO THOSE IN THE US WHO HAD ARGUED THAT THE US MUST COMPLETE NORMALIZATION BEFORE MAO DIED, AND ASKED WHAT ARGUMENT THIS GROUP WOULD DEVELOP NEXT TO URGE A HASTY COMPLETION OF THE PROCESS. THEY ALSO POINTED TO THE LACK OF A STABLE AND CONTINUING LEADERSHIP ON THE PRC THAT WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE US TO REACH ANY LONG-TERM UNDERSTANDING WITH THE PRC. THESE CONSIDERATIONS, THEY SAID, WOULD CAUSE THE US TO REASSESS ITS POLICY TOWARD THE PRC AND TAKE A MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH.

5. COMMENTING ON FUTURE USSR/PRC RELATIONS, ALL OBSERVERS AGREED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MAO'S DEATH TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE PRC. WHILE SOME OBSERVERS THOUGHT THE USSR WOULD REFRAIN FROM USING FORCE AGAINST THE PRC, OTHERS PREDICTED THAT THE USSR MIGHT USE MILITARY FORCE TO INVADE USSR/PRC BORDERLANDS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE US IS UNLIKELY TO REACT TO SUCH ACTION DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD. ALL AGREED THAT SOVIET PRESSURE WOULD FURTHER AGGRAVATE THE PRC POWER STRUGGLE AND THAT US/PRC/USSR RELATIONS COULD BE FURTHER COMPLICATED BY MAO'S DEATH.

6. ALL OBSERVERS URGED THE GROC TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND TO SUPPORT THOSE ON THE MAINLAND WHO WILL NOW RISE AGAINST THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP. OBSERVERS EMPHASIZED THAT MAO'S DEATH HAS BROUGHT THE ROC NEARER TO ITS GOAL OF RECOVERING THE MAINLAND. HOWEVER, NO CONCRETE  
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PROPOSALS WERE OFFERED CONCERNING WHAT SPECIFIC STEPS THE GROC SHOULD TAKE IN MEETING THE NEW SITUATION.

7. TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPERS CARRIED A VARIETY OF ANTI-MAO CARTOONS, STRESSING HIS EVILNESS AND THE JOY OF CHINESE AT HOME AND ABROAD UPON LEARNING OF MAO'S DEATH. UNDOUBTEDLY, OWING TO THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES ON THE MAINLAND OR TO NEARLY THREE DECADES OF PROPAGANDA, MANY PEOPLE HERE WERE

HAPPY TO LEARN OF THE DEATH OF THEIR "NUMBER ONE ENEMY."  
HOWEVER, MOST PEOPLE HERE SEEMED TO TAKE THE NEWS OF MAO'S  
DEATH IN A MATTER-OF-FACT FASHION, AND THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE  
ON THE STREETS WAS "BUSINESS AS USUAL." SEVERAL TAIWANESE  
WITH WHOM EMBOFFS SPOKE, RATHER THAN EXPRESSING ANY JOY, VOICED  
THEIR ANXIETY ABOUT WHAT FACT MAO'S DEATH WOULD HAVE ON THE  
FUTURE PRC LEADERSHIP AND ITS POLICIES TOWARD TAIWAN.

8. WE EXPECT THAT THE GROC WILL IN THE COMING WEEKS STEP UP  
ITS RHETORIC ON RETURN TO THE MAINLAND AND WILL CONTINUE TO  
EMPHASIZE INSTABILITY ON THE MAINLAND AS PROVIDING A FAVORABLE  
OPPORTUNITY FOR ANTI-COMMUNIST FORCES ON THE MAINLAND TO ARISE.  
HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT MAO'S DEATH WILL BRING ABOUT ANY  
SIGNIFICANT NEW ACTIONS ON THE PART OF THE GROC TO TAKE  
ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION. FOR THE PRESENT, AT LEAST,  
MAO'S DEATH DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ENGENDERED ANY WIDESPREAD  
GENUINE HOPE THAT THE GROC WILL RECOVER THE MAINLAND. AS  
ONE OLD MAINLANDER WOMAN OBSERVED TO EMBOFF, "HE DIED TOO  
LATE."  
UNGER

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